

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SCCT-01 EB-07 IO-11 /084 W
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R 101400Z MAR 76
FM AMCONSUL ASMARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3877
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON
COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN
COMIDEASTFOR
NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA
NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI
CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0228

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: SECURITY SITUATION IN ASMARA AREA

1. SUMMARY: SINCE THURSDAY, MARCH 4, THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL SCATTERED INCIDENTS IN THE ASMARA AREA WHICH RESULTED IN 23 VILLAGERS BEING KILLED AND TRANSPORTATION SITUATION FURTHER HAMPERED BY INSURGENT ACTIONS. IN ADDITION, EPMG AUTHORITIES ARE INCREASING SECURITY IN THE CITY AND ARE CONCERNED ABOUT FUEL SITUATION IN ASMARA. END SUMMARY.

2. ON THURSDAY, MARCH 4, A RUNNING ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN EPMG TROOPS AND VARIOUS SMALL BANDS OF INSURGENTS OCCURRED ALONG THE DECAMERE ROAD. THIS ACTION WAS LINKED TO AN EFFORT TO EPMG TO OBTAIN SILICONE SAND FOR SAVA GLASS FACTORY IN ASMARA.

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SAVA TRUCKS, REPORTEDLY 150 IN NUMBER, WERE INITIALLY

HALTED IN DECAMERE; HOWEVER, THEY ARE NOW REPORTED TO HAVE ON-LOADED SILICONE SAND AND ARE AWAITING RETURN TO ASMARA IN TOWN OF SAGANEITI. MEANWHILE, EPMG SECURITY FORCES CONTINUED SWEEPING VILLAGES SOUTH OF ASMARA BOTH ALONG DECAMERE AND ADI UGRI ROADS. RESULT OF SWEEPS WAS REPORTED KILLING OF 23 ERITREAN CIVILIANS IN FOUR DIFFERENT VILLAGES. REPORTS OF THESE KILLINGS HAVE AGAIN DAMPENED SPIRITS OF ASMARA RESIDENTS, WHO OBVIOUSLY FEAR RETURN TO MASSIVE REPRISALS ON SCALE OF SEPT-OCT 75 LEVEL.

3. EPMG AUTHORITIES HAVE SUSPENDED THE SALE OF GASOLINE, DIESEL FUEL, AND KEROSENE AS OF MARCH 9. SUSPENSION LINKED TO DISRUPTIONS OF FUEL CONVOYS TO AND FROM MASSAWA. LAST FUEL CONVOY ARRIVED MARCH 5, AND LAST EMPTY CONVOY DEPARTED MARCH 4. IT HAS BECOME STANDARD PRACTICE OF EPMG TO SUSPEND SALES OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS WHEN THERE IS BREAKDOWN IN CONVOY SYSTEM LASTING MORE THAN SEVERAL DAYS.

4. AFTER SERIES OF INSURGENT-INITIATED INCIDENTS FIRST WEEK IN MARCH, EPMG IS INCREASING SECURITY IN AND AROUND ASMARA. AS PATTERN OF ATTACKS AGAINST INDUSTRIAL TARGETS HAS BEEN DISCERNED, GUARD FORCES AT LOCAL FACTORIES HAVE BEEN DOUBLED. OTHER MEASURES INCLUDE MORE ACTIVE PATROLLING AT NIGHT BY ETHIOPIAN MECHANIZED FORCES AND BLATANT SHOW OF FORCE WHICH OCCURRED EVENING OF MARCH 9. LATTER DISPLAY INCLUDED THREE TANKS, TWELVE TRUCK LOADS OF TROOPS, THREE APCs, THREE ARMORED CARS AND A NUMBER OF ARMED JEEPS, ALL OF WHICH CIRCULATED FOR ALMOST AN HOUR THROUGHOUT ASMARA. SHERRY

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